United Nations S/PV.7892

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7892nd meeting

Tuesday, 28 February 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Yelchenko	(Ukraine)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Vaverka
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Klein
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-05282 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I would like to draw Council members' attention to a letter from the President of the Security Council dated 9 February 2017, inviting States Members and Permanent Observers of the United Nations to communicate to the presidency, if they so wish, suggestions regarding issues concerning the work of the Security Council during the month of February to be proposed for consideration at our meeting today.

I would like to thank the Member States that have submitted contributions to us. We were happy to see that they came from various regions of the world. The questions and proposals suggested concerned both substantive agenda items and the Council's working methods, and in our opinion deserve our serious consideration. An informal list of all the communications received was brought to Council members' attention. We hope that delegations will address the issues that were raised in their statements today. In the view of the presidency, establishing such a practice could contribute to enhancing the interaction between the Council and the general membership of the United Nations.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have been speaking in Arabic during our meetings because it is the official language of my country, but today I will speak in English, because I am speaking on behalf of all of my colleagues, and Ethiopia and Senegal in particular.

(*spoke in English*)

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African countries that are members of the Security Council, that is, Egypt, Ethiopia and Senegal.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's meeting to consider the implementation of presidential note S/2010/507. We believe it represents an important opportunity for Council members to go on the record with reflections on the work of the Council during the past month. On behalf of the African members, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your stewardship of the Council, and for a job well done during a very busy month, with many achievements.

The African members of the Council would like to highlight the following conclusions based on the work of the Council since the beginning of the year.

During the past month, the Security Council has continued to deal with an evolving set of complex conflicts and unresolved disputes on its agenda. Those evolving and emerging challenges will require a more robust, coherent and comprehensive approach on the part of the Security Council if they are to be resolved. Speaking from an African perspective, we feel that it would be very timely for the Council to adopt the concept of sustaining peace, in a practical and applied manner, as a target and process. We continue to believe that the Council is still far from achieving that target. There is a need for a paradigm shift in mentality, from one focused on managing conflicts to one that addresses their root causes, in accordance with their various contexts, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development. The set of tools available to the Council should be used judiciously, pursuant to varying contexts and realities on the ground. That will require enhanced analysis capacities and orchestrated engagement with various United Nations bodies by furthering the bridging and advisory role of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Against that backdrop, and while regional and international efforts in South Sudan have fallen short of assisting South Sudan to restore peace and achieve national reconciliation, now there are nonetheless good prospects following the joint meeting at the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, on 29 January in Addis Ababa, to revitalize the peace process with a view to ending the vicious cycle of violence and achieve national reconciliation. It is critical that the people of South Sudan, while respecting their diversity, also honour and foster their unity.

Together with addressing the root causes by contributing to the building by the South Sudanese of their national institutions of governance, the

Council should seriously enhance its consultation and coordination with regional actors, in line with the joint statement of 29 January, in order to ensure that all South Sudanese recommit to peace and end the violence. In that vein, empowering President Konaré's efforts is important and cannot be overemphasized. We see the national dialogue as a crucial opportunity to redirect the parties' attitude towards ending violence. The national dialogue should go beyond power-sharing arrangements and be conducted in an inclusive, transparent and credible manner so as to represent a real opportunity for peace and inclusivity.

The three African members of the Security Council reiterate their commitment to the prevention of conflicts, and in that regard stress the effective engagement of the Council in Gambia's political crisis between December 2016 and January 2017, which led to the peaceful handover of power to the current President, Mr. Adama Barrow. The African members commend the Council's approach, which culminated in the unanimous adoption of resolution 2337 (2017). The resolution was a manifestation of the prevention of conflict in action. It was also a result of a strong partnership between the United Nations, the AU and the subregional organization — namely, the Economic Community of West African States — as well as a testimony to the complementary roles played by the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council in maintaining regional and international peace and security. After that milestone achievement, the African members would like to highlight the need to continue to extend support to the new Gambian authorities in order to sustain peace and consolidate efforts towards Gambia's development.

The Council followed closely developments that took place in Somalia. It adopted presidential statement S/PRST/2017/3 on February 10, welcoming the conclusion of the electoral process, which culminated with the election of PresidentMohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmajo". Furthermore, the statement underscored major upcoming benchmarks, in particular building a strong Somali national army, functioning State institutions capable of delivering basic services, establishing law and order, and the launching of the constitutional review process. The three African members reiterate the need for the Security Council to continue closely monitoring the situation in Somalia and for the international community to enhance its support for Somali and African efforts with regard to stabilizing Somalian institution-building and economic revival.

Furthermore, in a press statement on 20 February (SC/12722), the President of the Council condemned the heinous terrorist attack that shook a Mogadishu market on 19 February, leaving around 40 dead and many more injured. This incident is a stark reminder of the continuous and precarious threat posed by Al-Shabaab to the fragile accomplishments achieved in Somalia. In this regard, the African members firmly believe that this challenge can be tackled only by rallying support for the African Union Mission in Somalia and the Somali national forces to rid Somalia and the region of the scourge of terrorism. The African members also note the importance of adopting a comprehensive and holistic approach to combating terrorism that is not limited solely to military and security means but extends to other relevant dimensions, including the economic, social, cultural and religious.

The three African members welcome the recent decision of the Security Council to visit the countries of the Lake Chad basin — namely, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria — from 2 to 7 March, with the objective to strengthen its support to the victims and affected countries in their efforts to address the threats posed by the terrorist groups Boko Haram and Da'esh, as well as to mitigate the humanitarian situation related thereto.

Once again, on behalf of the African members of the Security Council, we thank you, Sir, and we look forward to the United Kingdom presidency and to cooperating and supporting it in ensuring a successful outcome.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): Under your impetus, Sir, the Security Council's work in February was marked by very rich activity on all the subjects on its agenda, from Africa to the Middle East and Europe. More sadly, this month was also tragically marked by the sudden loss of the Permanent Representative of Russia, Vitaly Churkin, to whom we again pay tribute.

I would like to refer first to the meetings we have held on crises in Africa.

The consultations of 3 February with the Secretary-General upon his return from the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa were a highlight of this month. They provided an opportunity for an informal and in-depth exchange with the Secretary-General, who

expressed his willingness to make the strengthening of the relationship with the African Union a priority. We share his desire to continue to work better with the African Union and are committed to continuing this effort, both with the proposals to be submitted on the basis of resolution 2320 (2016), as well as with a view to future joint consultations between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council.

Several country situations in Africa also caught the attention of the Council this month. In particular, at the 8 February meeting on Côte d'Ivoire (see S/PV.7880), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire confirmed that the country continues to consolidate peace and stability and to make progress in areas related to national reconciliation and social cohesion. In that context, the transfer of the responsibilities of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire to the Ivorian authorities continues, in accordance with the mission's withdrawal plan. That meeting also recalled the enduring challenges. As illustrated by the incidents in January and February within the armed forces, more efforts are needed to reform of the security sector. President Ouattara's commitment is particularly encouraging. In this and other areas, the United Nations country team will continue to support the authorities' efforts towards stability and development. We hope that the international community will provide financial support for the transition plan presented last fall.

As regards the Central African Republic, we must remain vigilant. President Touadera and his Government, with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and other partners, are pursuing their efforts on behalf of stability and reconcilation, but they face armed groups that refuse to participate in good faith in dialogue and reform, and that pursue criminal activities. That is unacceptable at a time when the Central African Republic has the historic opportunity to move towards long-term stability. In that context, we welcome MINUSCA's affirmation of its posture and strengthening of its credibility. Armed groups must understand that pursuing criminal activities at the expense of State-building and suffering imposed on civilians will lead them nowhere .

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Council met last week at our initiative to discuss the situation in Kasai and the lack of progress in the implementation of the 31 December political agreement. Testifying to our shared concern, the members of the Security Council adopted a press statement (SC/12734) calling on the Congolese Government to immediately conduct a credible and impartial investigation and to bring to justice those responsible for the violence. The statement also calls on the Congolese parties to implement without delay the agreement of 31 December, in particular by appointing a Prime Minister. Two months after the signing of the agreement, it is more necessary than ever to maintain the good political will that made the agreement possible if more insecurity is to be avoided in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The statement also reflects the Council's willingness to closely monitor developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and — most importantly — to take action against Congolese actors whose statements or conduct would undermine the proper application of the agreement and the organization of elections.

At the initiative of the presidency, the activities of the Council have also been marked by several European dossiers, starting with the ministerial debate on European conflicts (see S/PV.7886), as well as the annual briefing by the chairmanship-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, presented by the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs (see S/PV.7887) and, yesterday, the briefing on the situation in Kosovo (see/SPV.7891). As members know, France is deeply committed to a resolution of the crisis in Ukraine, which must include re-establishing Ukraine's control over the entirety of its internationally recognized borders, including in Crimea. Along with our German partners, France remains determined to pursue its efforts under the Normandy format. Every result achieved on the ground matters. In our view, there is today no alternative solution but to support the implementation of the Minsk agreements, which is the only way to make progress towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

We are also convinced of the central role on the ground of the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as of the need to allow it carry out its mandate without hindrance. The resumption of fighting in recent days and the incidents targeting observers should lead us to step up our engagement on this issue, which the Security Council must continue to follow closely.

I should now like to turn to some issues relating to the Middle East that continue to be of concern to us. Turning first to Libya, the Council's consultations

on 8 February made it possible to express a solid convergence of views among members of the Council with regard to supporting the efforts of Prime Minister Faiez Mustafa Serraj to make the institutions established under the Skhirat Agreement more effective and representative, with heightened positive support from neighbouring countries and with the full support of United Nations mediation, which remains central. We hope that this positive momentum will be pursued in support of a political solution that is fully inclusive. We welcome the fact that the Secretary-General and the Council are fully engaged to that end. France will not let up in its efforts in that regard.

With regard to the peace process in the Middle East, the two-State solution has never been so threatened. The recent announcements by the Government of Israel concerning the settlement policy — announcing the construction of more than 6,000 new housing units — and the adoption by the Knesset of a law retroactively legalizing previous settlements on Palestinian land give rise to great concern. France hopes that the next report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) will make it possible to take stock of the consequences of those announcements to the contiguity of and accessibility to Palestinian territories.

Lastly, on Syria, after a few weeks' calm following the signing of the Russian-Turkish agreement on the ceasefire, the situation on the ground is once again deteriorating. The regime and the militias that support it are once again bombing civilian facilities, including hospitals, in numerous Syrian locales. Terrorist attacks are also continuing, in particular in Homs three days ago. More than 1,000 people have died since 22 December. We therefore hope that the monitoring mechanism developed in Astana will make it possible to establish full respect for the ceasefire throughout the whole of the territory, including full, unhindered access for humanitarian assistance, especially to the 13 areas still under siege by the regime.

It is against that worrying backdrop that the intra-Syrian negotiations have resumed in Geneva, under the auspices of the United Nations and including representatives of the regime and the opposition. We hope that the Syrian regime will at last accept to engage in good-faith discussions on the parameters for the necessary political transition, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

Another area of major concern with regard to Syria has to do with the fact that it continues to be a theatre for the repeated use of chemical weapons against civilians. To put an end to that, France and the United Kingdom, along with the United States, have strenuously endeavoured in recent months to bring the Council together around a response to those crimes, and have prepared a draft resolution on which the Council will soon act. We hope that the members of the Security Council, as they did in the case of resolution 2118 (2113), will assume their responsibilities and sanction the perpetrators of those criminal acts in violation of the universal prohibition on the use of chemical weapons.

Allow me to conclude by once again commending you, Mr. President, for the professionalism with which you have led the work of the Council during the month of February. I should also like to highlight the ongoing efforts of the successive presidencies to improve the working methods of the Council, both in terms of effectiveness and transparency. In that regard, we welcome the numerous elements to the press that have been agreed, which have made it possible for everyone to better understand the Council's deliberations in private consultations. We know we can count on the upcoming British presidency in pursuing that initiative and making the Council as effective a tool as possible in the service of peace and stability.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your excellent presidency during the month of February, especially today as Japan welcomes the efforts of the President to make formal wrap-up meetings more meaningful. I thank the delegations who made suggestions, and would like to touch upon some of the points raised.

First, on North Korea, it was significant that the Security Council, with new members in 2017, unanimously condemned the 12 February ballistic missile launch in a timely manner. In 2016 alone, North Korea conducted two nuclear tests and launched over 20 ballistic missiles, presenting an elevated level of threat. Such acts constitute blatant violations of the relevant Security Council resolutions, and are serious and direct threats to the international community as a whole. Japan calls upon all Member States, including the members of the Security Council, to strictly implement the relevant resolutions so that North Korea will change its course of action, commit to de-nuclearization, and return to dialogue.

On Syria, Japan believes that the Intra-Syrian talks must contribute to improving the humanitarian situation on the ground. At the Council meeting last week (see S/PV.7888), bureaucratic impediments and the security situation were raised as obstacles to humanitarian access. Japan has been urging the Syrian Government to simplify procedures, and we have received a written confirmation from the Government in that regard. However, that must be implemented on the ground. With regard to the draft resolution on Syrian chemical weapons, the Council needs to show its determination that the parties responsible will be held accountable.

Turning to South Sudan, the continuing violence and worsening humanitarian situation, exacerbated by the famine, are serious concerns. The national dialogue should be truly inclusive and widely embraced both domestically and internationally. Japan urges the South Sudanese Government to take concrete actions, including on the deployment of the Regional Protection Force and unhindered access for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and for humanitarian aid workers.

Japan has been making efforts to ameliorate the situation, including by dispatching our Prime Minister's Special Envoy, to urge the South Sudanese Government on the points I have mentioned and by providing financial assistance for humanitarian purposes through United Nations agencies as well as through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

I would particularly like to express my gratitude to those delegations that showed interest in presidential note S/2010/507. Discussion is under way at the Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Questions with a view to updating the note based on the views and proposals expressed at the open debate (see S/PV.7740) on working methods last July under Japan's presidency and on other occasions. Thus far, the Working Group has discussed such matters as reporting cycles, wrap-up sessions and Security Council missions. On 24 February, we discussed how we can improve the way we conduct the informal consultations of the whole. The goal is to make progress on the actual working methods of the Council. I cannot stress enough the importance of implementation, particularly by the Permanent Representatives of the Council.

Concerning the annual report of the Security Council, Japan is working with all countries that served on the Council during the 17-month reporting period to prepare the report to the General Assembly.

Lastly, with regard to the lessons learned on the process of selecting a Secretary-General, I issued a note in my personal capacity with some concrete suggestions, including on announcing the results of the Council's consideration of the candidates in order to increase transparency. I hope that the note will be useful in five or 10 years.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): I join my colleagues in the Security Council in reaffirming our commitment to all issues addressed during the month of February. However, I would like to focus on three items that appeared on the agenda in February and to which Kazakhstan is making a contribution: Central Asia, Syria and counter-terrorism.

My first point relates to the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. Although the situation in Central Asia is relatively stable, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Petko Draganov has indicated various vulnerabilities that make it fragile. Kazakhstan is therefore focusing the attention of the Council on the importance of building social and economic stability to promote long-term sustainable development in Afghanistan. Investment is being made in the education, health care, transport and communications sectors. Other Central Asian countries are also joining hands in that endeavour for a peaceful and secure Afghanistan. As a country representing Central Asia, Kazakhstan will pay great attention to preventive measures to ensure peace and security in Afghanistan and the region.

Secondly, with regard to Syria, Kazakhstan supports the measures taken by the United Nations, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Iran, with some Arab countries, the United States, the European Union and other international stakeholders, together with the Syrian Government and its opposition. Seen as a neutral bridge-builder, my Government has been trusted by all sides of the conflict. My Government hosted the meeting on Syria on 15 and 16 February in Astana to pave the way for inter-Syrian negotiations in Geneva. We were able to contribute to discussions on the release of detainees and abductees, the exchange of prisoners and bodies, the identification of missing persons, the provision of unhindered and sustainable humanitarian access, with the free movement of civilians and, finally, the implementation of the ceasefire regime and the

setting-up of a joint operations group, with a view to consolidating efforts. The involvement of Jordan, which hosts hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees, was a move in the right direction and the Astana process is therefore an important step forward.

Thirdly, with regard to counter-terrorism, as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, we convened a meeting on 3 February at which the Committee members discussed the comprehensive report of the Ombudsperson on retaining a petitioner on the sanctions list. The Committee has also considered the nineteenth report of the Monitoring Team (S/2017/35) and noted that, notwithstanding the sustained military pressure from the international coalition and Government troops in Syria and Iraq, the presence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida affiliates is a continuing threat to international security in wider regions of the world, especially in South-East Asia and West and East Africa. The report of the Ombudsperson's investigation on the petitioner, as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the Monitoring Team, clearly indicate the fragmentation and inadequacy of international efforts to defeat global terrorism. Therefore, we fully support the Secretary-General's proposals on the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture aimed at guiding the States Members of the Organization to better respond to terrorist threats and challenges.

Mr. Klein (United States of America): As we look back on the Security Council's work in February, first, once again, I would like to offer the deepest condolences of the United States to the Russian Federation on the passing of Ambassador Churkin. We were shocked and saddened and our thoughts are especially with the team at the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations at this time.

I congratulate you, Sir, and the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations on a successful presidency, even as your country continues to deal with the Russian occupation of Crimea and the dire situation in Eastern Ukraine. That situation necessarily was a major focus of the emergency meeting on Ukraine (see S/PV.7876) that you called early in the month and also your important open debate on conflicts in Europe (see S/PV.7886). We continue to support the Minsk agreements and their full implementation as the best path to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The United States condemns last month's targeting of monitors of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the seizure of a Special Monitoring Mission unmanned aerial vehicle by combined Russian separatist forces. It is imperative that those forces stop their attacks on civilian infrastructure, including the Donetsk water filtration station. We call on Russia and the separatist forces it backs to immediately observe the ceasefire, withdraw all heavy weapons and allow full and unfettered access to the OSCE monitors.

It was right and appropriate for Ukraine to draw attention to the sometimes overlooked danger of terrorists attacks on critical infrastructure. We welcome the adoption of resolution 2341 (2017) to help all States to prevent, mitigate and respond to such attacks and provide an impetus for Governments to cooperate more on critical infrastructure protection.

Looking ahead, the United States urges the Council to strongly condemn the Syrian regime's blatant violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention and of resolution 2118 (2013) and to support the draft accountability resolution co-authored by the United States, France and the United Kingdom, which will be considered right after this meeting. As we move into March, the Council must remain vigilant on the overall situation in Syria and support Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura's efforts to advance a political solution to end the rising violence and help ease the enormous suffering of the Syrian people.

Finally, I would like to highlight the Council's upcoming mission to Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria — under the leadership of the United Kingdom, Senegal and France — to examine the security and humanitarian impact of the Boko Haram conflict. The United States welcomes the progress made by the forces in Nigeria, Chad, the Niger, Cameroon and Benin, working together as the Multinational Joint Task Force, to clear the territory of Boko Haram and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-West Africa fighters. We look forward to discussing with the peoples and Governments of the Lake Chad basin region how best to support the humanitarian response to meet the needs of the conflict-affected population, as well as how best to support military and civilian initiatives in order to counter violent extremism and restore peace and stability.

In closing, I would like to thank you, Sir, for an excellently run month of February and to commit our

full support to the United Kingdom as it takes up the gavel for the month of March.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): At the outset, allow me to commend you, Sir, on your initiative to make the formal wrap-up sessions more interactive by inviting the membership to ask the presidency questions that Security Council members may attempt to answer during the meeting. This is a positive step towards updating and improving our working methods.

Before briefly addressing some of those questions, allow me to focus on one issue that has emerged as a common theme in many of our meetings this month and in January — illicit trafficking, including in cultural property, arms, drugs and human beings. In the first two months of our term, my delegation has consistently raised that issue and proposed language on it as appropriate in consultations, and when negotiating products of the Council. We have brought it up, for example, in our debate on Western Africa and Central Asia, the terms of reference for the mission to the Lake Chad basin, Guinea-Bissau, counter-terrorism efforts and the priorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We must be well aware of the challenges that illicit trafficking poses to the international community and of its dual nature as a potential cause and consequence of conflicts.

We are concerned about the growing links between transnational organized crime and terrorist organizations. Illicit trafficking has become a growing source of revenue for terrorists. It exacerbates conflict and fuels insecurity and instability. Trafficking in human beings offends our collective engagement and may amount to war crimes when committed in conflict situations, or crimes against humanity. This is why my delegation welcomes the Council's strong involvement with the issue, particularly in areas affected by conflict, as underlined most recently in the presidential statement contained in document S/PRST/2015/25 and resolution 2331 (2016).

My delegation has consistently raised this challenge when discussing a specific country or region so as to emphasize the complexity of the security scenario and the critical importance of consolidating our joint efforts to prevent and tackle all forms of illicit trafficking and its impact on international peace and security. Allow me to recall in particular the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and resolutions 2195 (2014) and 2331 (2016), which stress the direct linkages between trafficking and large movements of persons and aim to prevent the financing of terrorism through all forms of illicit trafficking. Looking ahead to the visit of the Security Council to the Lake Chad basin, we are eager to hear assessments on the effectiveness of measures to prevent trafficking in weapons to armed groups and any other forms of trafficking.

Naturally, international cooperation is crucial since it is simply beyond the capacity of any single State to take on pre-emptive action to address a problem that typically involves different countries of origin, transit and destination. This is why we believe Council involvement is so important. In this respect, Italy is also promoting the organization of high-level debate on the Palermo Convention and its implementation, which will be held at the United Nations in New York in June.

Turning briefly to some of the questions raised by the membership, in particular on working methods, and offering our perception as an incoming member — we have been here for two months — I must say that I have found the Security Council to be very effective and more united than I had been told it would be. Of course, political differences do remain, and Japan, incidentally, is working very hard with the assistance of all delegations to improve and update our working methods, which is a crucial element in our endeavours.

With regard to consultations, I have found Council members to be very constructive. Everyone is well aware of the need to manage time efficiently and has an interest in having an interactive discussion, going beyond talking points, thus enabling a better understanding of where delegations stand on the issues being debated. Preparing briefers in advance for a focused discussion and summing up the meeting with press elements are good examples of how we are trying to improve our working methods. I think both the Swedish presidency and that of Ukraine have been very effective in this regard.

In our view, a game-changer has been the Secretary-General's direct involvement in Council proceedings and the Secretariat's taking a more proactive role in providing policy options to Council members. The meetings with the Secretary-General on 3 and 24 February on his recent trips to Africa and the Middle East stand out, in our view, as best practices that the Council should pursue as often as possible in order to make its proceedings more goal-oriented and policy-driven.

In closing, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and congratulate you on your stewardship of this still-unfinished, very busy month of February. At the same time, we of course wish all the best to the incoming United Kingdom presidency.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The past month has been a very full one for the Security Council. In particular, there have been several meetings on regional and general issues.

I would now like to talk about the three important thematic debates that took place on the situation in the Eurasian region: on the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), on conflicts in Europe (see S/PV.7886) and the Austrian Chairperson-in-Office's briefing on the priorities for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (see S/PV.7887).

The outcome of the briefing by the head of UNRCCA, Mr. Draganov, on 2 February, led the Russian delegation to distribute a draft Security Council press statement. Unfortunately, due to the stubborn refusal of some delegations to recognize the close cooperation of UNRCCA with regional organizations, including the OSCE, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the text was not agreed for the fourth time in a row. The lack of reaction on the activities of UNRCCA not only hurts the image of the Security Council but also has a negative impact on cooperation between the Centre and countries of the region. It also fails to convey the right message to the Secretary-General of the United Nations who has made preventive diplomacy the crux of his activities.

We had hoped that during the 21 February meeting (see S/PV.7886), the Security Council would constructively discuss ways to react collectively to European challenges. Indeed, refutation of the policy of indivisible security has caused protracted conflicts and triggered new ones in Europe. We also had hoped that we would jointly convince Kyiv of the need to implement the Minsk agreements. Many delegations spoke of that at that time and today. However, we have to note that these hopes were dashed.

We share the priorities set out by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office — the Foreign Minister of Austria, Mr. Kurz — on 22 February (see S/PV.7887). We would like to see constructive cooperation in such key areas as conflict resolution, combating radicalization and extremism, and restoring trust among States. We would like to see the further development of cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE, including in the interest of this major European organization implementing United Nations decisions.

With respect to the unabated threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Jabhat Al-Nusra, Al-Qaida and their enablers, the Security Council should focus on the pressing issue of counter-terrorism. It is high time to establish a broad counter-terrorist coalition and improve measures to combat the fuelling and ideology of terrorism. The thematic meeting of the Security Council on 13 February on the protection of critical infrastructure from terrorists (see S/PV.7882) and the content of resolution 2341 (2017) unfortunately could hardly be considered evidence of priority being given to counter-terrorism. The discussions brought no new elements to the work of the Council or its existing decisions.

The discussion of the issue of the Middle East conflict on 16 February (see S/PV.7885) showed that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues to be marked by destabilizing factors, including repeated acts of violence, tensions around Gaza and settlement activities. We are convinced that there is a need today more than ever to take practical measures to unblock the peace process. Our proposal to conduct meetings with Messrs. Netanyahu and Abbas in Moscow remains on the table. We would like to see the Palestinian sides implement the agreements achieved during the meeting in Moscow from 15 to 17 January.

We nevertheless note a new positive feature — consultations on 3 February, where the new Secretary-General, upon his initiative, briefed the Security Council on his participation at the African Union (AU) summit. We note Mr. Guterres' intention to scale up cooperation with the AU and other African organizations with a view to settling conflicts on the continent. We support his intention to seek African solutions to African problems, with the whatever assistance is needed from the United Nations.

In conclusion, we would like to wish every success to the delegation of the United Kingdom, which will be heading the Council in the month of March.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I too would like to begin by expressing our heartfelt congratulations to you and your team on your leadership of the work of the Security Council this

month, which theoretically — well, not theoretically, as February is in fact the shortest calendar month of the year — could mean less work, but the intensity of the work has in no way diminished, and your delegation has been in continuous motion and provided very able leadership.

The month of February has also brought us an absence, in the form of the death of our colleague Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. This event affected us all, and once again we wish to reiterate our condolences to his family and to the Government of the Russian Federation, as well as to our colleagues at the Russian Mission.

In February, the Council has adopted a number of resolutions, on terrorist attacks against critical infrastructure (resolution 2341 (2017)), the renewal of the mandates of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (resolution 2343 (2017)) and of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan (resolution 2340 (2017)), and on the 2140 (2014) Committee's sanctions on Yemen (resolution 2342 (2017)). We also adopted a presidential statement on Somalia in the wake of that country's elections (S/PRST/2017/3). We have adopted a number of press statements and, as has unfortunately been the trend at to date, some of them have been in response to terrorist attacks.

With regard to Security Council meetings, I do not want to talk about each meeting but would like to refer to several, particularly those that were not public and to which the general membership did not have access. I will of course respect the confidential nature of consultations.

I would like to begin by mentioning a consultation that took place on 3 Februay in which the Secretary-General participated in person and discussed his participations at the African Union summit. We thank the Secretary-General for sharing first-hand with Council members the details of his busy agenda in Addis Ababa. That was the first time that I participated in the Council, and it was a very open initiative in which the Secretary-General gave a very comprehensive overview not only on the meeting that he held in Addis Ababa but also on the political context of the situation in the region. It was extremely useful to have that exchange with him and exhange views.

The Council also discussed a number of issues under the agenda item of "Any other business". Uruguay called for one of those meetings on the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. As a troop-contributing country, Uruguay places a very high importance on respect by the parties of Security Council mandates, as well as with with regard to documents that have been signed with Secretariat. Unilateral measures not only affect peacekeeping operations and set a dangerous precedent for the peacekeeping system, but they can they can also create risks to international peace and security.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the questions that the Security Council received from the membership in response to Ukraine's initiative to hold the wrap-up session. My response will not cover all of the questions, but I will attempt to comment on several of them in connection with the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence, and Transparency Group with regard to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. I do not recall the code as having been invoked as an instrument for addressing specific situations. What I can affirm is that those of us who signed that code must act in concert and in a spirit of shared responsibility to prevent and combat such serious crimes from occurring.

In the case of South Sudan, the Council is seeking to achieve results, but as we know, in some respects it is united and in another it is not. An example of that was the draft resolution of an arms embargo on South Sudan in December that could not be adopted and that Uruguay, moreover, supported.

In response to a question that was asked by a non-member of the Security Council concerning working methods, I reiterate the idea that the briefing-consultations format provides us all — members and non-members of the Security Council — with the opportunity to achieve greater transparency through using the meeting to read out statements made in a national capacity publicly and to save consultations for more sensitive issues within a more interactive dynamic.

However, with regard to consultations and the agenda item of "Any other business", I would like to mention the issue of documentation. It is crucial to have as much information as possible from the Secretariat during those closed meetings, including illustrative documents, such as detailed maps, when we discuss the situation in a particular region.

It is also necessary for the members of the Council to be able to obtain from the Secretariat the required documentation before those meetings so that members

can fully acquaint themselves with the issues at and make the appropriate decisions. It therefore is totally unacceptable for the Secretariat to deny access to documentation that is indispensable for Council members to be able to take a position and the necessary actions in order to fulfil their commitments. That is an extremely delicate issue, and in my view needs to be carefully considered by the Council.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the convening of this meeting by Ukraine and appreciates that country's leadership as President of the Security Council in guiding the Council's work for the month February. We once again convey to the delegation of the Russian Federation our condolences on and sadness felt over the passing of Ambassador Churkin.

With regard to this month's work, I would like to focus on the following three issues.

The first concerns the situation in Europe. This month, the Council held a ministerial meeting on conflicts in Europe (see S/PV.7886) and held briefings on the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the question of Kosovo. Recent years have witnessed general stability in Europe and progress on some hotspot issues. But complicated and uncertain factors remain, and conventional and unconventional challenges are increasing. All that calls for the concerted and united efforts of countries in addressing them. China hopes that the European countries will establish a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation, enhance their cooperation with each other and remain committed to the peaceful resolution of their differences and to comprehensive, just and lasting solutions to issues.

The second issue concerns the prevention of conflicts. Peace has been the common aspiration and lofty goal of humankind. China stands for resolutely defending the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and for establishing a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation and developing a shared, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security vision. The roles of the United Nations and the Council in stopping war and peacekeeping should be fully utilized. We must address the underlying causes of conflicts for the sake of development. We should also scale up efforts for preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding. We must remain committed to solving differences through political means.

The third issue concerns combating terrorism. This month, the Council held an open debate on the protection of critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks (see S/PV.7882). At a time when the fight against terrorism is facing increasing challenges, infrastructure has become an easier target for terrorist attacks. The international community should pay great attention to that and be united in its efforts. Terrorism is the common enemy of humankind, and China advocates a unified criterion in our fight against terrorism in which we fully leverage the leading role of the United Nations and the Council, while abiding by the purposes and principles of the Charter and enhancing coordination and scaling up cooperation in the fight against terrorism so as to jointly maintain world peace and security.

In conclusion, I wish the United Kingdom all the best in its Presidency for the month of March.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, personally, as well as your delegation, for your leadership of the Security Council the month of February.

As we take stock of the Council's work for February, it has not been a simple straightforward month. There have been some very positive developments, but there have also been some very bitter moments, such as the regrettable passing of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity once again to express our deepest condolences to Ambassador Churkin's family, the Mission of the Russian Federation and the Government and the people of Russia on the loss of one of their most brilliant ambassadors. Ambassador Churkin not only worked diligently to defend his country's interests, but he also worked in the context of very complicated negotiations so that political dialogue might prevail. That is the case of the ceasefire agreement in Syria, which we hope will be accompanied by a political agreement that would be the result of ongoing talks within the framework of United Nations efforts.

On another note, one of the most significant positive efforts from this month that we wish to point out is the fact that the Security Council was able to reach unanimous agreement on several fronts. That was the case with the adoption of resolution 2340 (2017) on South Sudan, resolution 2341 (2017) on the protection of critical infrastructure, resolution 2342

(2017) on the situation in Yemen, and resolution 2343 (2017) on the situation in Guinea-Bissau, which, I repeat, were adopted unanimously by the Council, and which were the result of dialogue and negotiation. Everyone contributes to the negotiation of resolutions in the General Assembly, adding to the text of such resolutions. I believe that logic was applied here in the cases I mentioned.

With respect to the issues raised by some Member States here today, I wish to point out and join in the proposal of one those Missions that open debates be compiled and summarized with a view to having a record of State participation in open debates convened by the Security Council. That would increase the transparency of its work.

Other Member States have referred to the prerogative of the Secretary-General to appoint Secretariat officials. We agree that no State can undermine that prerogative and power of the Secretary-General. However, at the same time, we call attention to the declaration of Heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 and China, which represents, as I believe everyone knows, two-thirds of the membership of the Organization. In that statement, the Group called for continued efforts to revitalize the General Assembly, to reform the Security Council, increasing — among other things — the amount of representation of developing countries, in particular in higher categories, and to improve geographical representation in the Secretariat. In that regard, all divisions that promote the increased participation of members should be encouraged by the Council and by the entire Organization in general.

In addition, I would like to highlight the leadership of Japan in the transformation and reform of our working methods. As a relatively new member of the Council, we have benefited from a variety of decisions that have allowed us to plan our participation in the Council's work ahead of time.

We join the representative of Uruguay in voicing concern over the lack of transparency of the Secretariat. In several instances, access to some documentation was not allowed. Ensuring that all information is available to all members of the Council is essential to our ability, as equal members, to make decisions.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I will remember February 2017 as the month in which my friend and colleague, Vitaly Churkin, passed away. I wish to once again pass on my condolences to the Russian team and to his family.

February was also a month in which Ukraine did an excellent job presiding over the Security Council, and I want to commend you, Mr. President, and your team, for the way in which you did that. I think a number of the working methods that you instigated should be continued. For example, your efforts to ensure the transparency of our work have been very effective. And, in response to the question posed by the representative of France, your involvement of civil society has been noteworthy, and something that the United Kingdom will continue next month. You have also made sure that we were focused on action and that, in particular, some sort of action came of our conversations in the closed consultations room, whether that was a bilateral meeting between you and the Permanent Representative of a country that we had been discussing, press elements or press statements. Very clearly, pursuing an action-oriented approach is something the United Kingdom would like to follow as well. Moreover, I think you did a good job of bringing difficult and at times divisive issues to our attention, including the conflicts in Europe, from which your country is suffering most particularly. The manner in which you did that was highly effective, and I congratulate you and your team.

In addition to our working methods, I would also like to say a few words about what we do and the content of our work, and to look both backward to February and forward to the British presidency in March. The overarching theme for next month will be preventing conflicts in Africa. That is something on which the incoming Secretary-General has placed significant focus. I strongly agree with him that prevention is better than the cure, and that investing upstream before things worsen is a good thing to do in terms of time, energy, effort and resources, all in the pursuit of saving lives and preventing threats to international peace and security from spiralling out of control. We have already had both good and bad examples of that in 2017.

The Gambia provides a good example from January, wherein the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States all came together in a highly effective way to prevent a conflict there. On the other hand, in February we have heard that the situation in South Sudan has got even worse and that, on top of the political complexity of that country and the risk of genocide, there is now a certified famine — only the second famine anywhere

in the world to have been declared since the year 2000. One hundred thousand people are starving in South Sudan, and 1 million are on the brink of famine. So, building on the work of this month, I think we need to do even more next month to ensure the Security Council is doing its utmost to support the efforts of the Secretary-General to bring peace to South Sudan. We will be holding a high-level briefing on that issue on 23 March.

In February, we have also heard about the worrying scale of violence against civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is another example of an area where preventing things from getting worse should absolutely be at the top of the Council's list of priorities. In that regard, it is vital that those who are responsible for such violence be held accountable for it, and that we see progress in the political process. We look forward to considering those issues further during the British presidency.

In all of these issues related to the continent of Africa, cooperation with the African Union and subregional bodies will be absolutely crucial. As I said, that was one of the things that made the Gambian example a positive one, and it is one of the things that we are seeking to do in South Sudan.

I would also like to mention Somalia. In March the United Kingdom will be hearing from representatives of both the United Nations and the African Union about progress in that country. And, of course, tomorrow night, we will be setting off on a visit to the Lake Chad Basin to have a look at four countries: Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, where there are a whole set of factors — political, security, governance, terrorism, environmental and surely many others — that we need to re-examine, working in concert with our colleagues from the African Union. I hope that gives an idea of some of the highlights — both of this month and next month — in terms of how we have been working closely together.

There is one final part of the British presidency in March that I wanted to mention — the open debate to be held here on 14 March on modern slavery. That speaks to the point made by our Chinese colleague on understanding the root causes, getting underneath the skin of issues, and trying to find the link between development issues and security issues. The scourge of modern slavery is a good example of an issue that touches on a very wide range of other issues of concern to the Security Council, and is absolutely a threat to international peace and security.

I would like to thank everyone for the good wishes for next month. I look forward to working with everyone and carrying on Mr. Yelchenko's highly effective working methods.

Mr. Vaverka (Sweden): I would like to start by joining other Council members in paying tribute to you, Mr. President, and to your team for your excellent stewardship of the Council during the month of February. The Council's most important task is to address threats to international peace and security in an effective way, and we therefore welcome the presidency's commitment to continuing our efforts to make the work of the Council more result-oriented, transparent and inclusive. Your innovation for today's wrap-up meeting, providing the wider membership with an opportunity to pose questions to the Council, is another step in that direction.

The Council members who have spoken before me have comprehensively addressed the important issues that have been on the Council's agenda this month, and I do not wish to expand or elaborate a great deal further on them, other than highlighting a few points without going into too much detail. We had a constructive discussion of the situation in the Middle East; we have focused a lot of attention on the security situation in Europe, which is, of course, of significant importance to Sweden; and we have looked at a number of issues in Africa and Asia. We have challenges ahead of us, and rather than repeating what has been eloquently discussed by other Council members, I will cut my statement a little short and perhaps address a few of the questions that have been raised by the wider membership, which has seized the opportunity presented by the Ukrainian presidency to give the Council some food for thought.

First, with regard to the issue of working methods, for the elected members the work done by the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, including presidential note S/2010/507, is key. Those notes provide useful guidance while retaining the degree of flexibility that the Council needs. We heard Ambassador Bessho of Japan describe the agenda of the Informal Working Group for this year, and I would like to say that we wholeheartedly support those efforts. In fact, many of the ideas needed to make the Council more effective are already there. Individual Council members should make use of them,

and the presidency has a special responsibility for putting them into practice. The Ukrainian presidency has demonstrated that in an excellent way.

To be truly successful, however, the support of all Council members is required, and we are pleased to note that the beginning of this year has seen us coming together behind those efforts. In that regard, two points stand out. First, as some of my colleagues on the Council have mentioned, the greater use of agreed-on press elements after consultations is not only a way to increase transparency but also helps the Council to summarize the salient points of discussions and think about how best to address the issues further. Secondly, the inclusion of relevant representatives of regional organizations and civil society as briefers has brought a field and regional perspective that has improved the Council's understanding of the full picture and thereby enriched the quality of its deliberations and decisions. I think we have seen that on several occasions this month as well.

That brings me to the issue of prevention, which was also raised by a Member State in the questions posed to the Council. Prevention is at the heart of the new sustaining peace agenda. The need for a strengthened relationship on prevention between the Security Council and the Secretary-Generai was one of the key messages that emerged from the open debate on 10 January on conflict prevention and sustaining peace (see S/PV.7857). In February, Ukraine has ensured that this strengthened relationship has come to life. Council members greatly appreciated the Secretary-General's interactive briefing of the Council on his return from the African Union Summit, during which he touched on several initiatives being taken to reinvigorate processes aimed at preventing relapses into conflict. That kind of interaction should continue, and I think that with a concerted effort between us — the Council — and the Secretary-General, we will be able to do that in a meaningful way.

To address a question raised about the subsidiary organs, I would like to mention that as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), I was pleased that the Working Group has already adopted speedy conclusions on the situation of children and armed conflict in Colombia, the first negotiated under our chairship. We will next focus on negotiating conclusions on children and armed conflict in Somalia.

In conclusion, I would like to respond to a question on the perceptions so far of the 10 newly elected non-permanent Security Council members and their short-term priorities. After two months on the Council, our overall perception is that at the moment there is positive momentum within it. The relationship between the Secretary-General and the Council is becoming stronger, and there is a commitment on both sides to working constructively together, with a renewed focus on prevention and sustaining peace. While there were some differing views, I believe that the idea of focusing on how we can prevent conflict — addressing root causes and looking at sustainable development, human rights, humanitarian challenges and issues of peace and security together — is increasingly becoming part of the Council's conversation. Encouraging that approach, including by engaging in dialogue with all Council members, is both a short-term and long-term priority for Sweden. We look forward to supporting and working closely with our colleagues from the United Kingdom as we continue those conversations in March. The Council trip to the Lake Chad basin region starting tomorrow will enable us to put that perspective into practice.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Ukraine.

Last year the Council organized meetings on the implementation of presidential note S/2010/507 just five times, and today is the first time this year that we have held a meeting on the subject. I believe that we should not judge the interest in the subject by those numbers, since all of us are aware of the acute interest in the Council's work on the part of the United Nations general membership, which is very much apparent in the corridors adjacent to this Chamber. We therefore see real added value in endeavouring to improve the format of the preparations for such meetings if we are to make our deliberations more efficient and relevant. In that spirit, the presidency has sought the input of Member States to shape today's discussion. We leave it up to future presidencies to continue and build on the practice.

Despite the fact that February is the shortest month of the year, it has been densely packed with meetings and discussions, both in the Council and in its subsidiary bodies. One of the highlights of our work this month was the initiative that the Secretary-General took to brief us on his participation in the African Union Summit. Without going into the details of the

briefing, which was very informative and useful, we believe that holding such meetings on a regular basis would immensely strengthen the relationship between the Council and the Secretary-General and thereby benefit the whole United Nations family. We are also looking forward to seeing the Secretary-General continue to play a more proactive role in bringing important issues of peace and security to the Security Council's attention.

On 13 February, the Security Council held an open debate (see S/PV.7882) on how we, as the international community, should provide a fitting response to the threat of terrorist attacks on critical infrastructure. We hope that resolution 2341 (2017), adopted at that meeting, will helpt to increase the effectiveness of States' efforts in that area, and in particular in the framework of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The subsequent discussion clearly reflected demands from Member States for significant improvements in the protection of critical infrastructure — especially aviation and maritime transportation, the nuclear industry, the finance sector and cross-border projects — from terrorist threats both physical and cyber. The question now is how thoroughly we can all implement the resolution and what further steps should be taken at the national, regional and international levels. I take this opportunity to inform the United Nations community that my country has already started the process of implementing the resolution through respective decisions of the President and the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine from 16 February.

On 21 February, the Council engaged in another open debate (see S/PV.7886) on the subject of conflicts in Europe. While it is quite obvious that, at the moment, it is rather hard to expect unity on the subject, a very real deterioration of the security situation on the European continent, with far-reaching repercussions for global stability and security demands the most urgent attention. We cannot afford to carry on in blissful ignorance, hoping that somehow the problems in question will simply disappear; they will not. Unless diligently and properly addressed, they will continue to fester and poison relations among States, further endangering international peace and security.

Responding to inquiries from our colleagues outside the Council on the work of the subsidiary bodies, I will say a few words in the capacity of the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic. In leading said Committees, I always strive to increase efficiency and transparency of their work, maintain constructive engagement with the Governments of countries concerned through their Permanent Missions here in New York, facilitate the work of their respective Panels of Experts and keep communication channels open with all interested parties. One of my most immediate plans at this point is to conduct a visit to Darfur to have discussions with Sudanese authorities and United Nations entities on how to further improve the Committee's work.

Following respective requests by a number of Member States, allow me to make several comments regarding the working methods of the Security Council in February. Like many others, Ukraine is quite concerned that despite the commitment to making greater use of open meetings, there is a marked increase in the number of informal consultations that the Council holds. From the very beginning of preparing the programme of work for February, my delegation strived to plan most of the briefings in open Chamber. While in the end, it was not possible to change established practice, we are grateful to Council members for their general support for such an approach and we hope that in the future, the format of consultations will gradually become less of a rule and give way to open meetings.

As one of my colleagues pointed out during one of the consultations, abstaining from communicating States' positions in public statements in the Chamber on any given subject can send the wrong signal to parties concerned. Sometimes, that kind of silence from the Council can be misinterpreted, resulting in unintended consequences. The Council has to find a balance between the confidentiality of informal consultations and the need to maintain a maximum degree of openness. Therefore, in line with President's note S/2015/507, we encourage future presidencies to continue briefing the media and the public after informal consultations with short summaries. We have tried to do so throughout the month and we would like to encourage those following us to further perfect that practice.

In preparation for Council's country-specific deliberations in February, I held meetings of the presidency with parties concerned before the Council's meetings or consultations. We consider it very important for the presidency to hear their views,

concerns, ideas, requests or expectations, as such advanced knowledge would contribute to shaping the Council's discussions accordingly.

In conclusion, I thank Council members for their kind words addressed to my team and me. If we were successful in presiding over the Council, it is because we enjoyed its cooperation and had its support. To my friend Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, as well as the delegation of the United Kingdom, who will be moving into this seat of responsibility in a few hours, I would like to convey a message of our unequivocal and full support.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.